



Connecting with children and youth of immigrant families: Service-learning through a social justice education course

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Summary

The multifaceted needs of the children of immigrant families are beginning to be better understood. Communities working with these children agree that teachers play an integral role in their academic success (Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2004; Guo, Arthur, & Lund, 2009). Likewise, the role of

service-learning in professional education has been proven to create critical consciousness in students (Cipolle, 2010; Pappamihel, 2007). This presentation focuses on findings from a study of a service-learning initiative within a teacher education program at the University of Calgary. This program weaves together efforts of the community, school boards, and the University and has the goal of enhancing the skills and knowledge of students so that children can learn in culturally responsive environments.

The presentation highlights the idea that everyone shares responsibility for the academic success of immigrant children. All presenters were directly involved with the strategic planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of the program studied and will explore dimensions of these processes. Also discussed is how service-learning experiences inform pre-service teachers' understandings of their role in supporting children of immigrant families. The benefits and challenges of expanding service-learning course offerings for pre-service teachers will be discussed. Finally, findings from pre- and post-surveys, field notes, informal interviews, and qualitative interview data are shared.

A portion of the session focuses on soliciting input from attendees regarding insights from other collaborative approaches that strengthen intercultural competencies of educational leaders. Implications from this project have relevance to a wide audience in a variety of contexts, particularly where people seek service-learning approaches to professional education with a focus on social justice.

References

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